HEALTH OF CALLINGTON.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT FOR 1910.

LOW BIRTH AND DEATH RATES.

The Medical Officer of Health for the Urban District of Callington (Dr. H. Davis, jun.) reports as follows to the Urban Council on the health of the district for the year 1910.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of births registered in the district was 32—19 males and 13 females; the number of deaths 22—12 males and 10 females; natural increase, 10, the birth rate being 18.6 per 1,000 per annum on a population of 1,714, as at the last census, and the death rate 12.8. Three deaths occurred under one year, two of these being within a few hours of birth; two under five years; nine between 40 and 65, and six over 65, the oldest being 80. Ten deaths were recorded as being due to diseases of the respiratory system, viz., one gold miners' phthisis, one tubercular phthisis, four pneumonia, three bronchitis, and one pleurisy. There were two deaths from heart disease, one from influenza, and nine from other causes, one being an inquest case. Ten deaths from diseases of the respiratory system is remarkable, but a year scarcely passes without some group of diseases being abnormally large, and this without any relation to the sanitary condition or health of the district. The obvious explanation is that a small district, with a small population, must frequently show wide fluctuations when the period under consideration is only one year. For statistical information the average over a period of many years, perhaps, five or ten, best taken with the census, would be the most reliable. The above figures, however, show that for the year both the birth rate and death rate are low.

In April, measles was communicated to the Wesleyan School from an adjacent district; after a month the epidemic became more general. The cases were of a mild type, and there was no death; it was not found necessary to close the schools; exclusion of infected and susceptible scholars arrested the epidemic within two months of its appearance. I made frequent inspections of the schools, and received valuable assistance from the masters. One case of scarlatina has been notified, a distinctly imported case; isolation of the patient, the use of disinfectants, and disinfection of rooms was done, and there has been no further spread of the disease. A mild epidemic of measles, one case of scarlatina, with the entire absence of diphtheria and typhoid fever, and a zymotic death rate nil, is a very favourable record, and the district justly claims the distinction of being classed a "healthy district." Tubercular phthisis is regarded and treated as an infectious disease. Vaccination presents no bright aspect for comment; it is going from bad to worse, and one can only dread the consequences of an outbreak of small-pox.

SEWERAGE.

It has not been necessary to extend or alter the sewerage system; the amount of work done in improving and relaying sewers during the last few years naturally leaves less to be done each succeeding year. This year it has only been necessary to put street gullies in Well-street, Liskeard-road and Valentine-row, and a ventilation shaft in Tavistock-road, all for a cost of less than £10. The sewers, in the absense of any structural means for automatic flushing, have done their work remarkably well; storm water, at times very heavy, has been easily carried, and the sewage is disposed of by broad irrigation over pasture land, and rapidly purified by the ordinary influence of nature, without giving rise to a nuisance or causing pollution of water courses

DRAINAGE.

Six houses have had new drains laid, and ten have had extensive repairs done, and two w.c.'s have been built, great care being exercised to ensure drains being properly laid and joints perfectly made and smoke tested.

WATER SUPPLY.

Much of the water is derived from private pumps and a public stream, but the greater amount comes from the Waterworks Company, and the supply during periods of drought is quite inadequate for the domestic purposes of the persons, especially at the higher levels, dependent on this source. The Company have, during the year, made efforts to secure a larger storage, but without success, and are now contemplating other means for providing a better and more constant supply.

TRADE PREMISES.

The requirements of the Factory and Workshops Act have been observed, as far as the cases of the district permit. On the whole trade premises are in a satisfactory condition; occasionally some defect is observed and corrected. With regard to dairies and cowsheds and slaughter houses registration is being proceeded with, but the process is extremely slow. Year by year we are gradually improving the conditions, but they fall far short of the requirements of the Local Government Board. This is a matter which needs more decisive action during the coming year.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

Two new houses have been built, their sanitary condition is good and certificates of water supply have been granted. For the most part the housing accommodation throughout the district is adequate for the needs of the population, although in some instances the sanitary conditions of the dwellings and their surroundings leaves much to be desired, and many back-to-back dwellings are permitted to be occupied, rather than take an action that would result in depopulating the district, no other cottages being available. The ruins of two disreputable-looking cottages in Church-street and others in Moonsfield remain in much the same condition as when I reported on them some years ago; it is to be hoped the owners will soon take some action in the matter. We have certainly waited long enough to have this objectionable state of things removed. One case of overcrowding has been dealt with.

SCAVENGING AND HOUSE REFUSE.

House refuse is removed by contract, ash-bins being emptied weekly, and other receptacles for broken glass, etc., monthly; this, as well as the scavenging work, is efficiently performed under the supervision of the surveyor. Larger storage for water for the water-cart has been provided, and we can now fully appreciate the benefits to comfort and health of well-watered streets. Nuisances have been numerous, at least 50 cases having to be dealt with. Our informal methods of procedure entail a vast amount of unnecessary labour for comparatively little result. I therefore think it advisable for the Sanitary Committee to meet more frequently to consider and adopt more drastic and formal means where necessary.

MIDWIVES ACT.

There is no registered midwife practising in the district.

The Infectious Disease (Notification) Act, 1889, and Part III Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1890, have been adopted. By-laws and regulations in existence are in relation to nuisances, new buildings, slaughter houses and dairies and cow sheds.